FRENCH INFLUENCES IN THE WORK OF CARLOS REYLES, URUGUAYAN NOVELIST

BY

HOWARD LAMOUREUX BATESON

B. A., John B. Stetson University, 1936

M. A., University of Texas, 1937

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN FRENCH IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, 1943

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Foreword

Carlos Reyles merits the honor of being one of Uruguay's most eminent writers. He is, in fact, the foremost novelist of that country. While it can hardly be said that his work is prolific, at the same time he attains the distinction of being Uruguay's most productive writer. Because of the handsome legacy placed at his disposal upon the death of his father, Reyles was enabled to indulge his fancies for European literature and subsequent trips abroad. His intellectual attitude is, therefore, cosmopolitan; and although he is decidedly individualistic, his concepts, reactions, and opinions are often very French.

This study is an attempt to reveal how frequently, in what ways, and to what extent the French element is present in the work of Reyles. Although the author is thereby stressing the French influence on Reyles' literary production, he does not wish to convey the idea that he is minimizing Reyles' individuality nor the Spanish characteristics which are inherent in a Spanish American and the further influence which the reading of Spanish literature and sojourns in Spain have had. For purposes of generalization, it may be stated that Reyles' individualism is paramount in his literary work; the Spanish influence is negligible beyond the actual language employed and the reflection in Spanish-American characters and settings; the French influence is dominant as a basis for intellectual theories, character problems, treatment, and style.

This work falls naturally into two parts of three chapters each. The first part is concerned chiefly with providing a background and a basis for the more detailed investigations of the second part. In order to furnish a pattern for comparison, it has been thought suitable to sketch in the first chapter the literature of France as it developed from the early nineteenth century to the contemporary period, including a brief discussion of the sources of the various French literary movements, the

philosophies accompanying each, and the divers foreign influences which aided in the crystallization of a particular trend.

The second chapter continues in historical vein to present a picture of the literature of Spanish America, emphasizing in particular the manner in which French literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been assimilated into the literary production of the new culture. Chapter three narrows the field of discussion to a treatment of Uruguay, her literary development and the manner in which France has played such a great rôle in her intellectual life.

The treatments of the three literatures—French, Spanish American, and Uruguayan—do not purport to be exhaustive and final. They are admittedly synoptic and highly selective but at the same time sufficiently broad and general to give both a proper perspective of three litratures and a heightened perception of one.

The second part turns to the case in point, Carlos Reyles and his work. In three successive chapters, the reader follows first, an account of Reyles' literary importance, his life, and work; second, a discussion of the French influence on the character of his work; third, the French influence as related to the form and style of Reyles' literary production.

In regard to Reyles, there is an extensive body of assorted critical articles concerning a portion of his literary work. Of his life, very little has been printed. Probably the most extensive work on Reyles is that by Osvaldo Crispo Acosta ("Lauxar"), but as it appeared in 1918, twenty years before the death of Reyles, it is decidedly insufficient for a complete analysis of the author. Attempts to bring evaluations of Reyles up to date have been made most successfully by A. Guillot Muñoz, Luisa Luisi, Arturo Torres-Ríoseco, and Alberto Zum Felde. No bibliographical collection contains a complete list of the publications concerning Reyles. In fact, the definitive evaluation of Carlos Reyles, his life and work, is still to appear.

Part One
The Literary Background of the Work of Carlos Reyles, Including the Basic French Trends and Their

Manifestations in the Literature of Spanish America, with Particular Reference to the Literature of Uruguay

The nineteenth century brought as great a variety of change and growth to the literature of France as it did to her politics and economics. While the destiny of France wavered through the century and her leaders experimented with revolutions, empires, republics, and her national pride knew exultant glory as well as ignominious defeat, her men of letters reflected every vicissitude in their own realm and produced a succession of literary innovations inspired by sentiments ranging from the most noble idealism to the most abject despair. It was a literature of such art, such variety, and such power that the entire western world felt it and reacted to its tenets.

In France, the general literary movements of the nineteenth century are reasonably well defined and dated. Historians of French literature record the following general divisions: the period of romanticism, 1800-1850 (including a period of transition from eighteenth-century literature, or pre-romanticism, 1800-1820, and a brief return to classicism in 1843); the period of realism, 1850-1870; the period of naturalism, 1870-1880; the period of symbolism, 1880-1900. It can be readily understood that these literary movements are not complete within the dates cited. Just as there is a natural period of preparation before one type of writing attains the zenith of its expression, so there is also a successive state of transition as one movement declines in popularity and produces another. The last years of the century brought to the attention of the reading public a conglomeration of literary experiments of brief duration legitimized under the title of various "ism's." As a result of this variety in literary endeavor, the twentieth century has revealed a decidedly eclectic type of literature in which the personality and individualism of the author have become of paramount importance.

Thus, the history of French literature in the nineteenth century follows a steady evolution from romanticism through realism and naturalism to symbolism. The barriers which supposedly formed lines of demarcation among the various schools of writing were never very strong for, just as there were early

strains of realism in the romantic writings, so there were traces of romanticism in the realistic and naturalistic writings, while symbolism carried on certain romantic characteristics to their natural climax. The present century appears to have selected the best qualities of these movements and blended them into a harmonious and effective whole.

If events occurred on the European continent with great rapidity, they were echoed with an almost feverish emulation in the New World. The Spanish-American continent has only recently come of age. The era of conquest and colonial life had lasted through three long centuries, from 1519 to 1808. As the state of government and society was largely primitive and medieval in nature, the type of literature produced during this period, when compared with later products, was limited and not especially artful. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, under a more stable form of government, a relatively settled state of society emerged with a resulting emphasis upon the cultivation of the arts and social refinements. The literary influence which came at this time from Spain consisted chiefly of the pedantic and inspiration-killing vogue of Gongorism. Small wonder, then, that with the accession of the Bourbon family to the Spanish throne in 1700, the influence of France was welcomed in literary fields. With colonial harbors now open to French vessels, there came a flood of French books to the Latin American shores. Toward the close of the colonial period, the eighteenth-century doctrines of Voltaire and Rousseau reached Spanish Americans and gave incentive to the spirit which brought freedom to them in the succeeding century.

The years expended by the Spanish American nations upon a struggle for independence, 1808-1826, were crammed with revolutionary activity and therefore hardly conducive to great literary production. Most of the writing done was of a doctrinary nature aimed at illustrating and documenting the Revolution. The period is otherwise distinguished by the establishment of printing presses in many of the major cities of each country.

During the remainder of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, the course of literary movements

in Spanish America is, in general, the direct counterpart of French literary modes of the same period. Early literary products often lagged far behind their European models, but, as the century wore on, Spanish-American poetry and novels followed the French movements more closely until at the end of the century both regions were producing the same style of work simultaneously.

The years 1826-1888, in Latin America, are noted especially for the fine production of diversified literary genres in which the spirit of romanticism is most easily distinguishable for the emphasis placed upon it. French poets who exerted the greatest influence during the romantic period were Lamartine, Musset, Hugo, and Gautier. In the realm of the novel, Spanish-American writers were impressed especially by the works of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, Dumas *père*, Hugo, Constant, Stendhal. A trend toward realism appeared in prose fiction with the fashion termed "costumbrismo," while Spanish America exercised a degree of originality in the development of two indigenous types of literature: the "poesía gauchesca" of Argentina and Uruguay, and the "tradiciones peruanas" of Ricardo Palma.

The year 1888 marks the literary rebirth of Spanish America, for it was in the period 1888-1910 that the Latin American countries discovered their own authentic personalities. At this time there was sufficient political stability to allow the intellectually inclined to turn their talents toward the development of a distinctly aesthetic movement. The spirit of the era was a new cosmopolitanism, a fusion of the Spanish heritage with the strong intellectual and cultural influences of France. Rubén Darío touched off the spark of the "modernista" movement in Spanish America with the publication in 1888 of *Azul*, his famous collection of verse and prose sketches. The new movement was characterized by the worship of beauty, refinement in language, the use of new and old verse forms, an increasing degree of formalism, and a tendency toward pessimism. In poetry, the "modernistas" combined the established characteristics of French romanticism with the more recent innovations of the Parnassians and the symbolists. They chose as their guides the Parnassian poets who were prominent in France during the 1860's: Gautier,

Leconte de Lisle, Sully-Prudhomme, José María de Heredia, Coppée, Catulle Mendès, Baudelaire; and the symbolists of the 1880's: Verlaine, Mallarmé, Maeterlinck. In prose, the "modernista" movement turned toward another inspiration and quickly assimilated characteristics found in the French novel. In this genre, Spanish-American writers recognized the mastery of Balzac, Flaubert, the Goncourts, Zola, Daudet, Maupassant, Huysmans, Bourget. Because of the rapidity with which Spanish American authors adopted French literary currents during this period, it is often impossible to determine where one movement began and another ended. The literature of the period 1888-1910, therefore, represents a fusion of romanticism, realism and naturalism, and symbolism.

In the years from 1910 to the present, European literary trends have lost some of their former power. Spanish America no longer depends for guidance on France and Spain, but rather turns her energies to the development of her own American literature. In the process, the Indian theme has achieved great importance. Gallicisms have been replaced by an almost bewildering array of regionalisms. In spite of the attempt at originality in literature, however, Spanish America could not entirely escape certain post-war currents from abroad. Directly from Spain, and with suspicious similarities to sensational French poetic fads of the World War I years, came the movements known as "creacionismo" and "ultraísmo." Through France came the novels of James Joyce. From Russia came the plays of Gorki. From France came the novels of Marcel Proust and Jules Romains. Although the influences of the French realists and naturalists and of the Russians are no longer so pronounced, the characteristics of this heritage of world writers are still evident in contemporary Spanish-American literature.

The intellectual panorama of modern Uruguay reveals a development far out of proportion to the diminutive size of the republic and in distinct contrast to her meager literary beginnings.

The colonization of Uruguay was the last episode in the Spanish invasion of America. The founding of the city of Montevideo, in 1726, was essentially a military operation; all cultural

growth, therefore, was limited by the martial atmosphere. Thus Uruguay and her capital were deprived of the three centuries of colonial status enjoyed by the other countries of Spanish America. As a result, the cultural and literary development of Uruguay offers startling evidence of retarded growth. Uruguayan writers, upon being introduced to the trends of European literature, have been forced to compensate for this delay in Uruguayan participation. The literature of the last half of the nineteenth century and more especially the literature of the present century reveal with what haste and dexterity Uruguay has met and assimilated the literary theories to which European countries, particularly France, had devoted years. The literature of Uruguay, comparatively new and recent, presents, therefore, a spectacle of assimilation in which many trends, often divergent, may be reflected in apparent contradiction in the same work.

In the development of her literature, Uruguay has followed the French pattern. In rapid succession, Uruguay appropriated the movements of romanticism, realism and naturalism, and symbolism; in turn, she wore them out more rapidly than did the country from which she borrowed them. Even in the twentieth century Uruguay has remained culturally a European satellite. The generation which has assumed leadership of the contemporary intellectual life of the country was formed under the influence of positivistic doctrines in philosophy, realism and naturalism in the novel and the theater, decadent symbolism in poetry, and impressionism in the plastic arts, and all of these elements have existed simultaneously and in apparent contradiction in the contemporary literature of Uruguay. No trend was too radical or too irrational for the newly awakened and keenly intellectual literary group to attempt. Uruguay proceeded to reproduce on a smaller scale the bizarre movements which were rife in Paris and Madrid during the years before and after World War I: futurism, cubism, dadaism, ultraism. As in France, however, there sounded a call to order so that a more rational type of writing came into being to counteract the more sensational literary productions.

The first third of the present century reveals Uruguay richly endowed with literary personalities. In this respect Uruguay is one of the most favored countries on the South American

continent. A rapid view of Uruguayan literature reveals a meager and hesitant beginning in all fields with an ever increasing participation as the years pass until the contemporary period results in an extensive flourishing of all genres. The most eminent men, whose careers were essentially literary rather than political, who gathered renown beyond the home borders and who have been warmly acclaimed by their native country, are Florencio Sánchez, José Enrique Rodó, Julio Herrera y Reissig, Horacio Quiroga, and Carlos Reyles.

Part Two

Carlos Reyles, Uruguayan Novelist, with Particular Reference to the French Influences in His Literary Production

Carlos Reyles has earned a reputation, both abroad and at home, as a writer of distinction. He was born in Montevideo, October 30, 1868, and died July 24, 1938. The particular factors which helped to shape his literary tastes and techniques include his education and experiences with his classmates at the local Colegio Hispanouruguayo where he employed his hours of solitude in reading extensively and in developing his intellectual individuality, his inherited preoccupation with scientific experiments in cattle breeding, and his series of trips to Europe which introduced him to Spain and particularly to France of the "décadence."

Inspired by Nietzsche's spirit of rebellion and love of energy, Reyles reflected these concepts in his daily life as well as in his literary work. His literary production reveals him as a writer of many facets. Always modern in concept, and frequently ahead of the times, his talents have brought him distinction as a writer of short stories, as a philosopher and essayist, as a social and economic reformer, as a novelist, and as a dramatist. Because Reyles was a very careful writer, his literary production is not prolific. Ever doubting whether a work was worth while or ready for publication, he revised and corrected and improved, striving for perfection in every detail.

Reyles' self education and extensive travels had placed the entire civilization and culture of Europe at his disposal. Through

his reading he was thoroughly acquainted with the leading writers of Spain, France, Germany, Russia, England, and Italy. Many of the contemporary writers he knew personally, particularly the French leaders and the foreign writers who swelled their ranks in the heterogeneous atmosphere of Paris during the last few decades. Small wonder, then, that this unusually rich education, when fused with a talent for writing, originality of imagination, and prodigious vitality, should produce a Carlos Reyles.

Reyles began writing just as French naturalism was giving way to symbolism and to the heterogeneous trends of the turn of the century. He had but recently digested the masterpieces of French romanticism and realism which in point of time had preceded the movements of naturalism and symbolism. Thus, Reyles' work reflects the general French literary trends of the age. His short stories and novels, although predominantly realistic, are at the same time romantic, realistic, naturalistic, symbolistic—and there are occasions which reveal his trend toward the modern preoccupations with metaphysics and the subconscious

The specific purpose of the present analysis is to reveal the extent to which French influences are apparent in the work and style of Reyles. The method employed consists of presenting the detail from Reyles' work by discussion or by quotation and of indicating a similar instance in an earlier French work.

The particular instances of "afrancesamiento" in Reyles' work are readily grouped under five headings: (1) the prefaces of Reyles' novels and their expressions of literary theory, from the standpoint of similarity to the ideas revealed in the prefaces of specific French novels; (2) Reyles' practice of utilizing short stories as the basis for novels, as related to the same technique employed by certain French authors; (3) the realistic aspects of Reyles' novels, including particular instances of documentation, regionalism, frankness of detail, and preoccupation with theories of heredity; (4) the social aspects which appear in Reyles' novels and their counterparts in French literature; (5) the psychological elements which appear in common in the work of Reyles and in the French novels of the late nineteenth century, with particular treatment of the "décadence" in both literatures.

French influences are also evident in the form and style of the work of Reyles. He shares in common with French writers in general, and with French writers of realism and naturalism in particular, a method of writing which strives for perfection of style, a significant characteristic in the case of Reyles because it is distinctly French rather than Spanish. Also among the characteristics of form and style which comprise Reyles' general French heritage are: the mastery of narrative technique, presenting a swift succession of events terminating in a dramatic and often unexpected climax; the artful handling of descriptive material, including effective use of documentation, lyricism, and character delineation; and the frequent adoption of retrospection as a device for elaborating upon background or for explaining psychological conditions. These characteristics reveal that Reyles must have been exceptionally well oriented in the French literature of the ninetenth and twentieth cnturies. This statement is further substantiated by the frequent use of allusions to French authors, French literary works, and French literary phrases in the novels of Reyles.

Conclusion

This study is intended to demonstrate the extent to which French influences are apparent in the literary work of Carlos Reyles. Part One has presented the various literatures which are involved in the problem. Because of the vitalizing effect of French literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries upon the inspiration of South American writers, this French background has been presented as the starting point. In turn, the literary growth of South America has been portrayed from the colonial period to the present for the purpose of contrast as well as to indicate when and how the French influence begins to be felt and to what extent it is received by South American writers. The field for discussion grows narrower with the emphasis upon the literary history of Uruguay. Against this background of interrelated literatures is silhouetted the figure of Carlos Reyles.

The chapters concerning literary history are of necessity brief and kaleidoscopic in nature. They provide, however, not only a suitable literary orientation but also a foundation for the study and evaluation of Reyles' work. As the theme throughout

this analysis is "afrancesamiento," the résumés of South American literature and of Uruguayan literature in particular are presented with special attention to the instances of French influence. Although the resulting picture may appear somewhat one-sided or biased, the natural and extensive influence of the mother country upon the literature of South America has not been ignored. The scope of this specific study, however, is to isolate and determine as far as possible the French element in the work of Carlos Reyles, with reference to Uruguayan and general South American literature.

To this end, Part Two reveals the literary heritage and development of Reyles. He is observed in the literary cross-currents of cosmopolitan Europe where he comes most often, by choice, in contact with France and her culture. The work of Reyles is then examined in the light of general French influences as manifested in literary movements and mental attitudes which have guided him in his literary ideas and manner. The work of Reyles is also analyzed with reference to the particular literary characteristics which bear resemblance to the French literature which functions as a large part of his heritage.

From this standpoint, the work of Reyles reveals direct assimilation of the literary credos of Bourget and the Goncourts; of the scientific pretensions of Zola; of the psychological analyses characteristic of Stendhal, Bourget, Barrès, and, in Reyles' final novel, of Gide and Proust; and of the stylistic methods of Flaubert and Maupassant.

The other literary qualities which are apparent in the work of Reyles are also predominantly the result of French influence because they are qualities of peculiarly French origin which in their original conception are entirely uncharacteristic of and foreign to the literatures of Spain and Spanish America or have been adopted only later by writers of these countries. Reyles' extensive knowledge of and early contact with French literature and French literary trends are only further evidence of the fact that he must have been receptive to French literary influences in the shaping of his own literary characteristics. If he had not been exposed to these French influences, it would have been impossible for him to treat certain subject matter as early as he did and with the technique which has become characteristic of his work.

Thus, the work of Reyles presents a synthesis of literary characteristics and trends common to French authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: he has inherited the qualities which constitute realism, naturalism, and symbolism in the novel. His choice of subject matter reveals his penchant for psychological analyses, sociological problems, and philosophical theories. His style varies from dramatic realism and factual naturalism to romantic lyricism and impressionistic introspection. Even Reyles' choice of literary allusions reflects the French influence. The list of French authors whose works appear to have furnished specific guidance and inspiration is extensive. Attention is called to the general and particular influences of Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, the Goncourts, Zola, Daudet, Maupassant, Huysmans, Bourget, Barrès, Gide, Proust.

Again it should be stated that the preponderance of French elements does not preclude the natural appearance of Spanish characteristics in the work of Reyles. His familiarity with Spain and his success in transcribing the subtle emotions of the Spanish people are nowhere more apparent than in the exquisite *Embrujo de Sevilla*. Yet, even when Reyles' inspiration is most Spanish, his literary technique is most French. Aside from the work mentioned, his novels are faithful to the Spanish American setting. In this detail, his intelligent interpretation of the Uruguayan scene, Reyles reveals his literary individualism.

In conclusion, from this study of his work, it is obvious that French influences in the novels of Carlos Reyles are great. The French element is everywhere noticeable in his literary technique. It colors his method of working and influences his style of writing. It appears in his philosophical concepts, his choice of subject matter, and in his characterizations. It is a factor in determining the realism of background, character, plot, and language. It influences the narrative and descriptive technique.

It is hoped that this study, by adding to the bibliographical data of Reyles, and by its detailed analysis of French influences on his work may aid in the understanding and appreciation of one of the leading Spanish American men of letters.

VITA

The author was born in Brooklyn, New York, on October 17, 1915. He received his primary education in Brooklyn and his secondary education in DeLand High School, DeLand, Florida. He received the bachelor's degree, *magna cum laude*, with majors in Spanish and French, from John B. Stetson University, DeLand, Florida, in 1936. He received the master's degree in French from the University of Texas, Austin, in 1937.

He has studied at the Alliance Française, Paris (summer of 1937), at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec (summer of 1938), and at Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont (summer of 1939).

He is Assistant Professor of French in the Modern Language Department of John B. Stetson University. For the past two years he has been on leave of absence to continue his studies as a fellow in French at the University of Illinois.

He is a member of the honorary organizations, Pi Delta Phi, Sigma Delta Pi, Theta Alpha Phi, Pi Gamma Mu, and of the social fraternity, Pi Kappa Phi. He has been faculty adviser for the Order of Scroll and Key (honorary scholastic organization, John B. Stetson University).